



JAMES L. MADARA, MD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org
t (312) 464-5000

October 7, 2015

The Honorable Charlie Dent
United States House of Representatives
2211 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dent:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for your legislation, H.R. 3537, the “Synthetic Drug Control Act of 2015.” This bill would close a gap in current law by regulating new synthetic drugs and thereby allowing prosecutors to bring more successful cases against the producers and distributors of these dangerous substances.

Although Congress passed AMA-supported legislation in 2012 that placed 26 synthetic drugs (including K2, Spice, and so-called “bath salts”) in Schedule I under the Controlled Substances Act, drug traffickers have devised ways to circumvent federal drug laws by slightly altering the chemical structure of their products and designing new synthetic drugs that mimic the effects of controlled substances. These new products, referred to as “controlled substance analogues,” are currently unregulated and are frequently marketed to young people. Since passage of the 2012 legislation, the Drug Enforcement Administration has identified over 250 new synthetic drug compounds in the United States. Under current law, the Federal Analogue Act provides that any chemical “substantially similar” to a controlled substance listed in Schedule I or II of the Controlled Substances Act is to be treated legally as though it were also listed in that schedule. However, it is very difficult to prosecute under the Federal Analogue Act because the courts have maintained a very high bar for the interpretation of “substantially similar.”

By amending the Federal Analogue Act to strike “substantially” from the analogue definition and allow for a substance to be treated as an analogue if it is chemically similar or produces a similar effect on the nervous system, your bill would make it easier for law enforcement to pursue the producers and distributors of these dangerous and often deadly substances. We applaud your leadership in introducing this legislation, and look forward to working with you to advance this important bill to protect the public, especially our young people, from the dangers of these synthetic drugs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD